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ABSTRACT

School-based management/shared decision-making (SBM/SDM) in New York City rests on the conviction that schools can be improved by giving school professionals and parents the flexibility to develop local solutions for local problems. Accountability is critical to this approach; a school system cannot ask school staff to accept responsibility for results without involving them in the decision-making process. In New York City, school-based planning as an administrative approach has been an important component of Basic School Staffing (BSS), a large-scale program introduced in 1987-88. This report fulfills a BSS evaluation requirement and serves as a research base for introducing SBM/SDM into the city's public schools. After providing some historical background and linking program development to effective schools research and strategies to serve disadvantaged students, the report addresses four major issues bearing directly on SBM/SDM projects: the teacher's voice; district/central leadership; parent/community involvement; and mission. Conclusions are then drawn about decision-making effectiveness. Recommended guidelines for implementing shared decision making are also provided. (232 references) (MLH)

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OREA Report

Toward School-Based Management/ Shared Decision-Making: A Research Perspective June 1990

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

School-Based Management/Shared Decision-Making (SBM/SDM) in New York City, rests on the conviction that we can improve schools by giving school professionals and parents the flexibility to develop local solutions for local problems. As Chancellor Joseph A. Fernandez has written, "It puts educational decisions about specific children into the hands of the people who know them best," and gives them the resources and the discretion needed to carry out these decisions.

Shared decision-making goes hand in hand with school-based management -- a form of decentralization that shifts planning, program implementation, and accountability to the individual school. It attempts to strike a balance between school autonomy and central office control. While the research literature often discusses school-based management and shared decision-making as two distinct administrative concepts, in New York City these terms are currently linked together with regard to applying shared decision-making as a management approach in schools.

Accountability is critical to this approach. By encouraging SBM/SDM, educators link two cardinal principles: a school system must require school staff to accept responsibility for student outcomes; but a school system cannot ask school staff to accept responsibility for results if it does not involve them in the decision-making process.

In New York City, "school-based planning" as an administrative approach has been an important component of Basic School Staffing (BSS), a large-scale program introduced in 1987-88. The BSS program seeks to rebuild instructional support services in elementary and middle schools through a planning process based at individual schools.

This report fulfills part of the BSS evaluation requirements. It also serves as a research base for the introduction of SBM/SDM into New York City's public schools. It does not treat shared decision-making in isolation, however; rather, it addresses the topic in the framework of Effective Schools Research (ESR) and related school improvement literature.

AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Before the 1980s, most schools identified as effective evolved from the dedicated but "groping" efforts of a principal or other school leader, or a small group of leaders. Beginning about 1980, efforts to create unusually effective schools on a planned basis proliferated rapidly throughout the United States.

Effective schools advocates based their efforts in part on research that showed the key role of shared decision-making in developing staff motivation and commitment. They began to emphasize faculty involvement in initial planning as a

way to help a large number of schools become more effective. In this way, the effective schools model led to a greater stress on school-based planning and shared decision-making.

In New York City, a formal mechanism for SBM/SDM was introduced, on a limited scale, with the School Improvement Project (SIP) in the late 1970s. While promoting the characteristics known to be associated with effective schools, SIP introduced school-based planning groups representing participating schools' constituencies.

In 1987-88, New York City's Board of Education established the Basic School Staffing (BSS) program to raise staffing levels in the City's public schools over a five-year period to the standard prevailing elsewhere in New York State. In 1989-90, the program is in its third year; since its inception, "school-based planning" has been critical to its design and implementation.

In January 1990, Joseph A. Fernandez took office as Chancellor the New York City Board of Education, and announced that his administration would make School-Based Management/Shared Decision-Making the driving force of educational reform. He wrote: "Over time, School-Based Management/Shared Decision-Making can bring creativity back into our classrooms by infusing the principle of teacher/parent ownership into every aspect of the educational process" (The Chancellor's Budget Request for 1990-91, p.1).

Dr. Fernandez announced that his administration would begin laying the groundwork for this approach immediately, with a view toward introducing it into some schools in September, 1990.

SBM/SDM AND EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS RESEARCH

The Effective Schools Research (ESR) model is an approach to school improvement that holds promise for children in disadvantaged situations because it offers a mechanism for identifying and supporting instructional environments and strategies to enhance learning for students with special needs. Programs that adhere to the formal ESR model share three key attributes. They are committed to quality and equity; they are research-based; and they are data-driven.

Many studies of effective schools projects suggest that most of the decisions and actions needed for significant improvement must be reached and implemented at the school level. Some point to key attributes of effective schools that are related to SBM/SDM: faculty cohesion; faculty input in decision-making; and an emphasis on problem-solving.

The research also establishes a link between school-based planning and stronger accountability. Administrators who solicit faculty input in planning are more likely to insist on vigorous adherence to resulting policies.

CONCLUSIONS

This report addresses four major issues in the effective schools movement that bear directly on SBM/SDM projects: the teacher's voice; district/central leadership; parent/community involvement; and mission. It then draws general conclusions about the planning process.

The Teacher's Voice

* There is a great deal of support for making teachers key players in school reform. But there has been little research to guide principals and teachers in collaborative planning efforts.

* Nationally, most teachers take part in textbook selection and curriculum planning, but play virtually no role in crucial decisions on budget, staff, and school policy.

* Greater teacher participation is not inconsistent with administrative action and initiative at the superintendent or principal level.

* If initiatives are too fast, or too radical, and run counter to teachers' perceived self-interest, they may prove counterproductive.

Parent/Community Involvement

* Narrowing the gap between students' experiences at home and in the classroom is a major challenge facing policy-makers.

* Parent advisory committees are widespread, but there is little evidence that these groups hold meaningful decision-making power.

District/Central Leadership

* Successful SBM/SDM hinges on a judicious mixture of autonomy on the part of the planning group, and a measure of leadership from the central office -- a kind of "directed autonomy."

* Leadership and support from central decision-makers (and, in projects with state government participation, from state officials) are vital to success.

* Effective schools researchers stress the importance of district/central leadership in setting the mission, priorities, and directions for successful change.

* District/central planners must strike a balance between two objectives: to foster change at the school level, their plan must address needed changes in district policies and programs; but they must stop short of mandating what each school must do in its improvement plan.

* Change is most likely to take hold when it combines elements of "bottom-up" planning with "top-down" stimulation, guidance, and support.

* Today, the effective schools movement has shifted from a school-by-school approach to a district/citywide model.

* This model builds upon the notion of a district/central plan that supports school change, but assumes that change requires the alignment of policies, programs, and procedures beyond the control of a single school.

* Ideally, the district/central office acts decisively to provide general direction, and at the same time gives sufficient technical and financial assistance to allow successful program implementation.

* When central decision-makers abdicate responsibility for helping schools implement mandates, the result is "non-implementation," "illusory implementation," or "phantom implementation."

Mission

* Articulating the district/central and school mission is a primary consideration.

* Organizational researchers agree that a complex organization like a school cannot have multiple missions; one must emerge as primary.

* Early in the planning process, participants must address key questions that may appear self-evident, but often cause confusion: how are they defining SBM/SDM? What end result are they trying to achieve?

The Decision-Making Process

* Participants in the planning process are most effective when they are given wide latitude in implementing curriculum and instruction at the classroom and school levels.

* The success of SBM/SDM hinges on the availability of substantial, appropriate training and technical assistance, both for teachers and administrators.

* Members of school-based planning committees need adequate time, both to develop planning procedures and to hammer out and monitor action plans -- especially if they are considering ideas that may conflict with state or district policy.

* If they are to move decisively to change instructional programming, planning committees need discretion to allocate resources for priority areas.

Research and practice suggest the following broad guidelines for shared decision-making:

1. Include representatives of all groups -- e.g., administrators, teachers, parents -- who have a stake in the outcome on the planning team.

2. Establish ground rules for team decision-making.

3. Keep issues related to improving instruction high on the agenda.

4. Base plans for improvement on solid information.

5. Keep improvement goals sharply focused.

6. Use rigorous, sound methods to monitor student achievement criteria.

7. Allow for substantial staff development time, building it into the regular work day whenever possible.

8. Be realistic about the need for technical assistance.

9. Avoid strategies that bureaucratize your initiatives.

10. Seek out materials, methods, and implementation strategies that have proven successful elsewhere.

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Additional copies of this report are available by writing to:

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[SM] Service Mark. "Effective Schools Research" is a service mark of the National Center for Effective Schools, as is "Effective Schools." The capitalized phrase denotes the comprehensive model espoused by the National Center.

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INTRODUCTION

The practice of shifting the locus of educational decision-making to the individual school building is described through several closely related concepts: school-based planning, shared decision-making, and school-based management. Throughout the research literature, these three terms are often used interchangeably to describe various aspects of decision-making and management processes occurring at the local school level.

In this report, we generally use the term Shared Decision-Making/School-Based Planning (SDM/SBM) because we believe it provides the most comprehensive description of the overall process taking place within an individual school and because it reflects the philosophy and program guiding school reform today in New York City. To provide a clear context for our discussion, the following paragraphs define our understanding of these key terms.

SHARED DECISION-MAKING

School-based planning may refer to decisions made at the school level by a single principal or administrator; it does not necessarily denote a consultative process. In contrast, consultation among school professionals and parents is clearly critical to shared decision-making.

In addition, school-based planning tends to focus attention on curriculum planning, whereas shared decision-making extends to all of the key domains of decision-making. This includes not only the teaching process, but also resource allocation; work allocation; and policy-making, such as grading policy, reporting procedures, student rights, performance evaluation, and staff hiring (Conley 1989).

The focus on shared decision-making is part of the "second wave" of school reform, in which attention shifted from state-level initiatives to restructuring the system by which local schools are run (Cistone 1989). The emphasis, in recent school reform efforts, on defining and shifting the locus of educational decision-making reflects a long tradition, in organizational science, of looking at organizations as decision-making entities (Conley 1989). It reflects the growing consensus -- in private enterprise as well as public institutions -- that top-down, bureaucratic forms of management are not effective (Cooper 1989). Shared decision-making implies shared leadership, meaning "that all members in an organzation are encouraged to participate in decisions that affect them" (Regional LAB Reports, March 1989).

SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT/SHARED DECISION-MAKING

Shared decision-making goes hand in hand with school-based management, a form of decentralization that shifts planning, program implementation, and accountability to the individual school, and ensures that school professionals and parents have the concrete resources and assistance they need to carry out these roles.

SBM/SDM attempts to strengthen the role of stakeholders through shared information and greater involvement in decision-making. It attempts to strike a balance between school autonomy and central office control (Land and Walberg 1989).

SBM/SDM has been most closely identified with Dade County Florida, where it was introduced in the mid-1980s by Superintendent Joseph Fernandez. However, its origins date back to 1971 and Florida's Citizen's Committee on Education. This

group concluded that the "complexity" of educational problems are best handled "where and when instruction occurs"(cited in Rosow and Zager 1989, p. 147), and that educational decisions -- including decisions about the use of educational funds -- be made at the school level, rather than in the central office.

Today, there is a growing consensus that SBM/SDM is a key to revitalizing American education. It has been endorsed by both community groups and by leading associations of school administrators, teachers, and school boards.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability lies at the heart of school reform (Cavazos 1989). SBM/SDM is a means to an end: a rigorous accountability system is needed to guarantee that educational programs actually improve achievement (Fernandez 1990).

SBM/SDM links two cardinal principles: a school system must require school staff to accept responsibility for student outcomes; however, a school system cannot ask school staff to accept responsbility for results if it does not not involve them in the decision-making process.

In the context of SBM/SDM, decision-making, at any level, must be data-driven. While the educational literature emphasizes teacher participation in decision-making, it has surprisingly little to say about increasing teachers' access to timely information. SBM/SDM calls for a direct connection between assessment and planning. Achievement data drive planning, so that new programs target demonstrated areas of weakness and build on known strengths (Fernandez 1990). Before instituting SBM/SDM in any school, a school system must be prepared to give local planners timely, accurate, relevant information about student performance and

student need.

If schools are going to be held accountable for results, they must have the tools and information they need to address these key questions: On the basis of hard achievement data, what do we know about the specific needs of our students? Which outcomes do we most value? Does our program of curriculum and instruction address those outcomes, while meeting all mandates? If not, how can we change that program? Which goals shall we pursue? What resources and support do we need to ensure success?

Finally, are students in our schools achieving the results we seek? If not, how can we make our school more effective? And are all groups of students benefitting equally from our programs? If not, how can we ensure equity?

By addressing these critical questions, local planners forge strong links between shared decision-making and shared responsibility.

THE BASIC SCHOOL STAFFING PROGRAM

In New York City, school-based planning and consultation was specified as a critical component of Basic School Staffing (BSS), a large-scale program introduced in 1987-88. Conceived as a strategy to create more effective schools, the BSS program sought to rebuild instructional support services in elementary and middle schools through a planning process based at the individual school level.

The BSS proposal called for a two-pronged evaluation: first, a literature-based review of issues in school-based planning; and second, a field study of program implementation. This report is intended to meet the first requirement. At the same time, it serves as a research base for policy development as we move toward

SBM/SDM in New York City's public schools.*

A BROAD APPROACH

This report surveys current issues in SBM/SDM, but it does not treat that topic in isolation. Rather, it takes a broader approach, reflecting the fact that SBM/SDM is embedded in a multi-faceted reform program. It is one element in a process that aims to create the positive climate that students need to succeed, and that educators need to improve their schools.

SBM/SDM is closely linked with a cluster of educational initiatives that together constitute a strategy of active collaboration, giving educators and consumers the discretion and resources they need to create effective, responsive, distinctive schools. In the history of New York City's educational policy, shared decision-making is inextricably tied to movements for school improvement, shared accountability, and decentralization.

For all of these reasons, we have placed our review of SBM/SDM in the framework of Effective School Research (ESR) and related school improvement literature. Each chapter addresses different aspects and issues pertinent to SBM/SDM, specifically:

* Chapter 1 provides a historical perspective of school-based planning in New York City;

* Chapter II contextualizes the relationship of SBM/SDM within the effective schools research;

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* The field study evaluation report, "Basic School Staffing (BSS) Program 1987-88 and 1988-89", is also available from the Office of Research, Evaluation and Assessment.

* Chapter III outlines some of the major issues involved in SBM/SDM;

* Chapter IV addresses implementation issues and offers a practical guide for participants interested in implementing SBM/SDM; and

* Chapter V summarizes the conclusions of this report.

I. AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: SCHOOL-BASED PLANNING IN NEW YORK CITY

As Edward B. Fiske recently wrote in the New York Times, "Public education in the United States has traditionally been viewed as a national interest, a state responsibility, and a local enterprise" (June 7, 1989). Centralized decision-making has not always been a given; indeed, for much of America's history, local or lay control of schools was the rule, rather than the exception.

This section recounts the recent history of school-based planning in New York City, placing these initiatives in the context of the effective schools movement.

THE EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS THRUST

The effective schools thrust is so basic to today's reform efforts that one easily forgets how recent a phenomenon it is. Before the 1980s, most schools identified as effective evolved from the dedicated but "groping" efforts of a principal or other school leader, or a small group of leaders.

By the early 1980s, educators were unwilling to wait for a few highly successful schools to spring haphazardly from the unplanned efforts of an exceptional or maverick principal, and began to seek out strategies for systematically enhancing effectiveness. Beginning about 1980, efforts to create effective schools on a planned basis proliferated rapidly throughout the United States. In most cases, such efforts have taken shape as multi-school projects which, to some extent, recognized the participating school building as the fundamental unit for bringing about improvement.

Effective schools advocates based their efforts in part on research that showed the key role of shared decision-making in developing staff motivation and

commitment (Purkey and Smith 1983; Taylor 1984; Mace-Matluck, n.d.). They began to emphasize faculty involvement in initial planning as a way to help a large number of schools become more effective. In this way, the effective schools model led to a greater stress on school-based planning and shared decision-making.

THE NEW YORK CITY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

In New York City, today's commitment to broader participation in educational decision-making has roots in the late 1960s. The citywide decentralization plan adopted in 1969 responded to the public demand for a strong community role in shaping educational policy. But while locally elected school boards did indeed set policy for their districts in critical areas, the structures and processes for local decision-making were seldom put into place at the school level.

A formal mechanism for school-based planning was introduced, on a limited scale, with the New York City School Improvement Project, which grew out of the work of Ronald Edmonds in the 1970s. A prominent researcher and co-founder of the Effective Schools Research model of school improvement, Edmonds isolated five characteristics of schools where achievement was high, and where that achievement was equitably distributed across the student population (Edmonds 1978). These "correlates" of effective schools included:

* Strong administrative leadership
* Emphasis on basic skills
* An orderly school climate
* Ongoing assessment of pupil progress
* High expectations for student achievement

In 1978, Edmonds was invited to put his ideas to work in the New York City

Schools, first as Senior Assistant for Instruction and later as Deputy Chancellor for Instruction. As his research was put into practice, the New York City School Improvement Project (SIP) took shape. Founded upon the conviction that "all children can learn," SIP was "intended to demonstrate that it is possible anytime, anywhere to intervene in a school" (Edmonds 1982).

In addition to focusing on the five correlates, the proposal for SIP incorporated school-based management and designated a special role for school liaisons or facilitators. The aim was "to help participating schools improve their instructional effectiveness through school-based planning groups representing the school constituencies" (Canner and Guttenberg 1984).

In fall 1979, ten public elementary schools chose to pilot the SIP program (Clark and McCarthy 1983). Four of the original ten schools subsequently chose not to continue, but by 1983, an additional 19 elementary schools had joined the project. Participation was later extended to the high schools. Although a follow-up study of these original SIP schools has not been conducted, the program continues in many schools throughout New York City.

To recount the history of SIP or evaluate its impact is beyond the scope of this report. But since it was the New York City's first formal adoption of school-based planning and shared decision-making, this excerpt from an early evaluation summary merits citation:

> The New York City's School Improvement Project demonstrates that when schools rigorously implement activities that address the Edmonds factors, gains in student achievement and staff attitudes can be made. However, there is no magic formula or set of prescribed activities that will automatically lead to increased effectiveness at low-achieving urban schools. Systematic and skillful application over a period of time sufficient for real institutional change to occur is required. (Canner and Guttenberg 1984).

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES IN THE EARLY 1980s

In the 1980s, educational reform moved to the top of the nation's political agenda, and support for school improvement intensified. On the national level, a number of widely-cited studies sparked concern about the quality of education in the United States. These include: A Nation at Risk, the 1983 Report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education; A Nation Prepared, the Carnegie Report on the Task Force on Teaching as a Profession; and Time for Results, the 1986 report issued by the National Governors Association. In its 1989 report, A Time for Assertive Action, the New York State Education Department echoes this concern.

On the state level, the New York Board of Regents issued its Regents Action Plan in 1982. This was followed in 1984 by a series of state-mandated reforms, including:

* more rigorous high school academic achievement requirements;
* public disclosure of student performance on designated indicators; and
* the identification of low-performing schools which were then required to initiate school-based planning through a program of school improvement.

Late in 1985, the New York City Schools' Chancellor announced a citywide policy of school improvement, calling for dramatic changes in the public school

system, including provisions for closing or reorganizing schools which failed to meet minimum academic performance standards. The city and state governments made resources available to bolster guidance services, support dropout prevention programs, reduce class size, and increase remediation efforts. The plan gave low-performing schools three years to show significant improvement on selected indicators.

In December 1985, a Commission on Minimum Standards was established to set the standards that would guide future improvement efforts in New York City public schools.

THE BASIC SCHOOL STAFFING PROGRAM

In 1987-88, New York City's Board of Education received $20 million from the City Council and the Board of Estimate to rebuild instructional support services in elementary and middle schools. The initiative -- Basic School Staffing (BSS) -- sought immediately to "strengthen instructional support by hiring additional subject specialists, library, guidance, attendance, training and supervisory staff to be assigned to individual schools" (Green 1988). The initiative's long-range goal was to raise staffing levels in the City's public schools over a five-year period to the standard prevailing elsewhere in New York State.

The BSS initiative was conceived as a resource strategy for school improvement, and school-based consultation and planning, including shared decision-making, was critical to its design and implementation. School-based planning processes and committees already in place in a school were required to play a key role in determining local staffing needs. Where no such process or

structure was in place, the BSS initiative required that a school-based consultation and planning process be implemented. Chancellor Green anticipated that "every elementary and middle school in New York City would see a tangible gain in staff and services that would be the product of local planning and consultation" (Memorandum of May 6, 1988).

THE FERNANDEZ ADMINISTRATION: SBM/SDM IN NEW YORK CITY

When he took office in January, 1990, Chancellor Joseph Fernandez set a new agenda for the school system. To improve student performance, he introduced SBM/SDM as a central policy and process in New York City's public schools, committing all of the energies and resources of the central administration to supporting this transformation.

Shared decision-making is a critical component of SBM/SDM, which insists on local, collaborative planning. This planning process is designed to sharpen schools' focus on their students' particular learning styles, interests, languages and cultures, and their specific strengths and weaknesses. It emphasizes locally-designed services, making it possible for a school to respond to the needs of all of its students, including those with special needs such as giftedness, handicapping conditions or limited English proficiency. Local planning efforts also allow schools to help students deal with critical issues such as substance abuse, homelessness, teen pregnancy, or child abuse.

The new policy recognizes that without intensive, focused professional development and parental support, SBM/SDM cannot work. The process of translating SBM/SDM into day-to-day practice therefore begins with these support

services. They are now underway, with a view toward implementing SBM/SDM in over 100 schools in September 1990. Along with increased decision-making autonomy, SBM/SDM schools will also be accountable for achieving the instructional goals they have set. A formal documentation of the SBM/SDM initiative will be conducted to provide regular feedback to all participants. As noted in Chancellor Fernandez's Special Circular No. 41, 1989-1990, this will include formal evaluations of technical assistance activities, attitude surveys of planning team members, and formative evaluations of school-based activities.

II. SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT/SHARED DECISION-MAKING AND EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS RESEARCH

School-based management -- and its critical collaborative planning component -- is a central issue that educators are considering as they work to create settings conducive to student success and school improvement. We therefore begin our discussion of relevant research with a review of effective schools research, as it relates to school-based planning and shared decision-making.

Numerous studies conducted over the last decade document substantial improvement at schools that have taken part in effective schools projects, or similar school improvement efforts (McCormack-Larkin and Kritek 1982; Eubanks and Levine 1983; Taylor 1984; Gauthier, Pecheone, and Shoemaker 1985; Lezotte and Bancroft 1985; Everson, Scolay, Fabert. and Garcia 1986; Nagel 1986; Groom 1989; Murphy and Waynant 1989). These studies shed light on implementation of the Effective Schools Research model, and identify critical issues in the planning of a multi-school project.

THE EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS RESEARCH MODEL

The Effective Schools Research (ESR) model is an approach to school improvement that holds promise for children in disadvantaged situations because it offers a mechanism for identifying and supporting instructional environments and strategies to enhance learning for children with special needs.

As an extension of Ron Edmonds' original research, a further set of seven "correlates" has been developed by Gauthier (1982, 1985), Shoemaker (1982:198), Villanova (1984), and others involved in the Connecticut School Effectiveness Project.

These correlates have become closely associated with the ESR model. They include:

* Safe and orderly environment
* Clear school mission
* Instructional leadership
* High expectations for success
* Opportunity to learn and attention to student time on task
* Frequent monitoring of student progress
* Positive home-school relations

Of course, virtually every major educational program seeks to create more effective schools, and pursues at least some of the objectives listed above. But programs that adhere to the formal ESR model share three key attributes. They are:

* Committed to quality and equity: They focus both on quality of education and equality of educational opportunity. To be considered "effective" or "improving," a school must be able to demonstrate that its educational program meets both criteria.

* Research-based: They rest on a solid foundation of research. The various ESR programs across the nation are based -- in terms of content and process -- on the effective schools and effective teaching research that has evolved over the last 15 years. In addition, these programs draw upon three related bodies of research: effective staff development; organizational development in education; and planned change programs.

* Data-driven: Decision-making at the school level is informed by empirical data. In the process of introducing planned change, measurable or observable evidence is given more weight than subjective professional judgments. These data are used to determine when teachers, classrooms, or schools have met pre-set standards.

These attributes set ESR-based programs apart from other approaches to school improvement.

SBM/SDM AND THE ESR MODEL

Studies of effective schools projects support the premise that the individual

school building is the key unit for bringing about educational innovation. They suggest that most of the myriad decisions and actions needed for significant improvement must be reached and implemented at the school level (Edmonds 1979; Brookover, et al. 1982; Austin 1985; Lezotte and Bancroft 1985). Other studies point to key attributes of effective schools that are related to shared decision making.

Faculty Cohesion

Faculty members at effective schools are committed to a school-wide mission of academic improvement for all students. Compared to faculties in less effective schools, they tend to be more cohesive, and achieve greater consensus regarding the organization's goals and problem-solving priorities.

Communication among faculty members tends to be stronger at effective schools -- both fostering and reflecting a collaborative, cooperative approach to improvement efforts. Extensive analyses by Purkey and Smith (1983), Taylor (1984), Rosenholtz (1985), Fuller and Izu (1986), Cohen (1988), and others show that cohesion and consensus are particularly important in organizations where staff are challenged to accomplish a number of difficult and sometimes conflicting goals; where the means to accomplish these goals are not clear; and where external as well as internal considerations tend to cloud goals and fragment improvement efforts. Many analysts also believe that collegiality is a key factor in improving cohesion and communications, identifying and solving problems, and bolstering other aspects of effectiveness (Little 1982; McCormack-Larkin and Kritek 1982). In summary, studies of effective schools observe that their faculties tend to exhibit these "five C's": cohesion; consensus on goals; collaboration; collegiality; and superior communications. Indeed, numerous researchers conclude that these characteristics

account, in large measure, for a school's success (Armor 1976; Wilder 1977; Clancy 1982; Jackson 1982; Sizemore, Brossard, and Harrigan 1983; Taylor 1984).

Faculty Input in Decision-Making

In recent years, educators at every level of public education have called for greater teacher input in decision-making as an important step toward strengthening the profession and revitalizing the schools. The Dade County, Florida and the Rochester, New York school systems are two of the largest and best-known efforts that foster SBM/SDM.

In New York City, school-based decision-making is an integral part of the United Federation of Teachers/Board of Education contract. If 75 percent of a school's staff agree on a school improvement plan addressing local needs, contractual requirements can be waived. This "school-based options" provision was exercised by 30 schools in 1988-89.

The literature indicates a sound basis for engaging teachers in planning. Numerous researchers have found that effective schools rank high on faculty input in decision-making (Borger, Lo, Oh, and Walberg 1985). A study conducted in San Diego County, for example, reported that unusually effective schools scored high on collaboration in problem-solving (Pollack, Watson, and Chrispeels 1987). Eight thousand miles away, in inner-city London, researchers found that students made the greatest strides in schools where "the deputy and/or teaching staff were involved in decisions about the allocation of pupils and of teachers to classes" (Mortimore 1987:225).

Principals of effective urban schools in Phi Delta Kappa case studies (Duckett 1980) had established mechanisms to provide staff input. Extensive shared

decision-making was likewise characteristic of an effective school studied by New York researchers (State of New York 1974).

The link between shared decision-making and accountability was noted by Jackson (1982), who compared two effective schools with two less effective schools. Principals at the more effective schools were more likely to solicit faculty input in the planning process, but then insisted more vigorously on adherence to resulting policies.

The research suggests that high levels of faculty input may constitute the key vehicle for change in the absence of strong leadership, or when other improvement initiatives have failed. But shared decision-making is unlikely to succeed in isolation; serious attention must be paid to other effective school correlates as well.

Emphasis on Problem-Solving

The case-study literature shows that administrators and teachers at effective schools are oriented to problem-solving, and have strong skills in this area, as well as a willingness to change existing practices and implement more effective approaches (e.g., Doll 1969; Brookover, et. al. 1979; Levine and Stark 1981; Sizemore, Brossard and Harrigan 1983; Taylor 1984). Their attitude appears to be: "If what we are doing is not working for students, particularly low achievers, we will identify the obstacles we face and try something else that may overcome them."

III. MAJOR ISSUES IN SBM/SDM

Public education has entered a period of change and experimentation. Today, there is widespread, growing acceptance of the notion that schools profit tremendously from increased teacher participation in fundamental reform -- including site-level planning (of which SBM/SDM is an example). And more and more, that theory is becoming practice.

Proposals for programs that give teachers a greater voice in school-level planning vary widely: at one end of the continuum are relatively modest projects that involve teachers in fairly marginal decisions; at the other end are radical efforts that give teachers primary or sole responsibility for re-designing virtually every aspect of their schools, with few constraints and little or no regard to historical precedent for budget allocation, class size, or contractual rules.

The scope of this report does not allow for a comprehensive analysis of such proposals and experiments. (Some are discussed at length in other sources, such as Clune and White 1988; Conley, Schmidle, and Shedd 1988; and White 1988.) However, we can review five major issues in the effective schools movement that have particular relevance to SBM/SDM projects: the teacher's voice; district/central leadership; parent/community involvement; mission; and the planning process. The first four are discussed in this chapter; the planning process is covered in the following chapter.

THE TEACHER'S VOICE

What roles should be assigned to the principal and teachers, and what kinds

of resources do they need to succeed? As we have noted, in the past, effective schools have generally evolved from the innovative efforts of an exceptional principal or individual leader. Unquestionably, the principal's instructional leadership is a major factor in improving schools. However, educational reformers recognize even the most talented benefit from collaboration with parents and teachers, who have most specific knowledge of students' educational needs, and that all principals can be far more effective if teachers are fully committed to fundamental changes. Accordingly, there is a great deal of support for proposals to strengthen the decision-making role of

teachers, making them key players in school reform. Unfortunately, there has been little research to guide principals and teachers -- to help them define their roles or learn how to function -- as they work together to plan and implement improvement efforts (Conley, Schmidle, and Shedd 1988).

Most effective schools projects have used some kind of decision-making committee or cabinet, including the principal and elected or appointed teacher representatives. Frequently, parents or representatives of the community and/or external organizations are also included, as are students at the secondary level. Such committees are often useful -- sometimes even indispensable -- components in planning (Kopple 1985). But beyond this generalization, research provides few clues as to the optimal size for a planning group, how it should operate, or the mechanisms it might use to involve the entire faculty, such as votes or membership on subcommittees.

For example, research provides no specific guidelines for dividing or distributing decision-making among administrators or teachers: it is a matter for

reasonable, well-intentioned people to sort out. Most often, guidelines will vary a great deal from district to district, and even from school to school, depending on the shared values of the people involved and of their school's culture (Taylor 1984).

The literature on teacher empowerment raises a number of difficult, related questions:

To what extent do teachers already shape key decisions?

Recently, the Carnegie Foundation contacted some 40,000 public school teachers in all 50 states to determine the extent of teacher involvement in educational decision-making. More than half of these teachers completed the survey, and the resulting study, issued in 1988, was the most comprehensive ever conducted in this area (The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, September 1988).

The survey found that most teachers take part in textbook selection and curriculum planning, but play virtually no role in crucial decisions on budget, staff, and school policy. Across the nation, teachers reported particularly little input in setting promotion and retention policies, deciding school budgets, evaluating teacher performance, selecting new teachers, or selecting new administrators. They were somewhat more likely to play a role in setting standards for student behavior, deciding whether students are tracked into special classes, and designing staff development and in-service programs.

In his introduction to the study, Ernest Boyer characterized teachers as "front-row spectators in a reform movement in which the signals are being called by governors, legislators, state education officials -- those who are far removed from the field of action."

Should teachers or administrators dominate planning?

First, while some researchers lay stress on empowering teachers by providing them with more decision-making authority, others underscore the importance of administrative action and initiative, at the superintendent and/or principal level, in school improvement (Leiberman 1988). These findings are not necessarily contradictory, for decision-making in organizations is not a zero-sum game. Greater teacher participation does not necessarily reduce the power of administrators (Tannenbaum 1968; Pecheone and Shoemaker 1984).

What about teachers' self-interest?

A second consideration, closely related to the first, is that many actions required to make schools more effective may run counter to teachers' perceived self-interest. For example, substantial improvement is likely to require more time and effort beyond the bounds of the present workday; the acquisition of new instructional techniques may be a difficult task for many teachers; and an emphasis on active and enriched learning, focused on higher-order skills, means a de-emphasis on those skills that are most easily taught. Of course, the fact that teachers are asked to take on new responsibilities, and even hardships, is a strong argument for taking steps toward shared decision-making. Initiatives will be most productive if they are not undertaken too quickly and are not perceived as too radical or running counter to teachers' self-interest.

Is training available?

The success of SBM/SDM hinges on the availability of substantial, appropriate training and technical assistance, both for teachers and administrators. The importance of training was emphasized in a recent study of developments in 31

school districts attempting to initiate one or another approach to school-based management:

> Increased training is an obvious response to the difficulty of the roles involved in SBM, and lack of training did surface as a problem. . . . In schools or districts where very little training was provided, participants complained that they had been given inadequate orientation to the program. (Clune and White 1988:28-29)

One approach to providing training and technical assistance has been described by Everson, Toft, Fabert, and Garcia (1986), who portrayed the implementation of a planning process developed and successfully put into place by the Midcontinent Regional Educational Laboratory (McREL). A school leadership team was formed, with no more than nine members. Initially, four full-day workshops for team members were spaced four to six days apart; administrators attended four additional half-day sessions. The workshops were devoted largely to analysis of data collected on student, teacher, and administrator performance at participating schools.

Is there sufficient time for planning?

As one principal involved in school-based planning has written, "It is a process, not an event, and it requires mountains of time. We must create more time during the school day for educators to talk to educators" (Hasson 1989).

Members of site planning committees need adequate time, both to develop planning procedures and to hammer out and monitor action plans. Clune and White agree that planning can be a "very time-consuming process" for already burdened principals and teachers, and may be especially protracted if the group is discussing "ideas which go against state laws or district policy" (1988:28).

Is there flexibility in resource allocation?

If a discretionary fund is available, planning committees and, indeed, entire faculties can acquire early experience in aligning and realigning resources to pursue educational goals, and can move quickly to change instructional programming. The importance of a significant discretionary fund was highlighted in a recent evaluation of efforts to enhance site-based planning in New York City (Kelly 1988).

Some SBM/SDM projects are experimenting with other mechanisms that allow faculties to reallocate funds within their budgets, including special provisions for waiving or modifying restraints imposed by state or district policies, or teacher and administrator contractual limitations. It is too early to determine whether this approach is likely to succeed, or under what circumstances.

PARENT/COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Increasingly, school improvement literature has focused on narrowing the gap between students' experiences at home and in the classroom -- particularly for minority youth and those at risk of leaving school without adequate basic skills. Indeed, several educators have recently concluded that the social, linguistic, and experiential gap is the major obstacle faced by at-risk students, and that bridging it is educators' most pressing challenge (Comer 1988; Natriello, et al. 1986; Maeroff 1988; Cummins 1986).

Researchers have found that the more schools extend their reach into the community, the more successful they will be with at-risk students (Comer, Hawley and Rosenholtz 1984; Epstein 1987). "The Time for Assertive Action: School Strategies for Promoting the Educational Success of At-Risk Students," issued last

year by the New York State Education Commissioner's Task Force on Education of Children and Youth At-Risk, reflected a greater recognition of the need for resources to fund school-community linkages.

To what extent are parents and community members already involved in SBM/SDM?

Most schools and programs have created mechanisms, such as parent advisory committees, to involve parents and other community members in educational affairs. For example, some states have set up parent committees to involve minority parents in shaping bilingual programs. In California, the parent group -- which must reflect the makeup of the program's target population -- signs off on school plans for the use of program funds (Cummins 1986).

Despite these initiatives, the literature rarely documents cases where parent groups hold real decision-making power. The report on a conference on successful schooling for the at-risk student, sponsored by the New York State Education Department, found that, "There are many who believe that parent involvement is either not needed or an impediment to efficient school functioning" (Graber and Shapiro 1988). The consensus at this conference was that with so few successful models of parent involvement, educators need to redefine the process. "It is not sufficient to tell schools that they must have parent involvement; they will need to be assisted in the process" of implementing a systematic approach to parent support.

Some observers of parent advisory groups go a step further, viewing them as detrimental to the cause of school improvement. Writing in the Harvard Educational Review, Jim Cummins concludes:

> Although lip service is paid to community involvement through Parent Advisory Committees (PAC) in many education programs, these

> committees are frequently manipulated through misinformation and intimidation (Curtis 1984). The result is that parents from dominated groups retain their powerless status, and their internalized inferiority is reinforced. Children's school failure can then be attributed to the combined effects of parental illiteracy and lack of interest in their children's education. (Cummins 1986:26).

Can schools effectively involve parents in planning?

The literature provides numerous case studies of school-based planning projects that successfully involved parents and other community members. Describing the planning component of the Mastery in Learning Project in his Wells, Maine junior high school, principal Robert G. Hasson, Jr. documents a team approach to resolving sixth graders' behavior difficulties:

> . . . The team decided that a special plan should be developed to help these students develop the skills necessary for success in school.
>
> Students, parents, and staff all contributed to the development of this plan; the special education teachers who worked in the school and the Mastery in Learning site consultant provided advice as well. All of the information gathered was presented to the entire team at meetings, and the recommendations were eventually developed into a Comprehensive Behavior Plan.
>
> The team, as a whole, developed the plan, implemented it, and continue to reflect on and revise it. ("How to Own Your Own School," in The Regional Lab Reports: On Shared Leadership, March 1989, p. 5)

Working in two New Haven schools serving large populations of at-risk students, James P. Comer concluded that fostering positive interaction between parents and school staff is a key to promoting academic achievement. And a major step in that direction is reducing the destructive home/school interactions that, in Comer's view, typify many urban schools.

> To this end we created in each school a governance and management team of about a dozen people led by the principal and made up of elected parents and teachers, a mental-health specialist and a member of the nonprofessional support staff -- all the adults who had a stake in the outcome. The teams decided issues ranging from the schools' academic and social program to changes in school procedures that seemed to engender behavior problems. (Comer 1988:46-47, emphasis added.)

How do parents function on a decision-making team?

In the Comer model, a set of rules guided each team. First, all team members -- including parents -- had to recognize the principal's authority, but the principal could not make unilateral decisions without considering the views of team members. Second, the teams agreed to concentrate on problem solving, rather than assigning blame for current difficulties. And third, the group made decisions by consensus rather than by vote.

DISTRICT/CENTRAL LEADERSHIP

Practitioners who have implemented effective schools projects and analysts who have monitored results generally share the conviction that leadership and support from central decision-makers (and, in projects with state government participation, from state officials) are vital to success (e.g. Purkey and Smith 1983; Clark, Lotto, and Astuto 1984; Pecheone and Shoemaker 1984).

Not surprisingly, the same conclusion has been stressed in more general research on school change (e.g., Fullan 1982; Hall and Hord 1987; Fuhrman, Clune, and Elmore 1988). A summary of major findings by Cox, French, and Loucks-Horsley (1987), based on several decades of research on successful change in education, concluded:

> Principals...did not act alone, but in combination with district and other building staff.... A combination of district/building pressure and support was critical...[in part because] for significant innovations to receive adequate attention they had to have the district's mandate, which...in effect, took pressure off principals.... Leadership and support took many forms and came from many sources.... The collaboration and support structures of successful change efforts are models for routine district/school operations, not a single recipe for who should do what. (1987:23-24)

How much autonomy should school-based planners have?

On the one hand, much of the research cited in this report shows that school-based planners are most effective when they are given wide latitude in implementing curriculum and instruction at the classroom and school levels (see also Floden, et al. 1987). On the other hand, effective schools researchers stress the importance of district/central leadership in setting the mission, priorities, and directions for successful change.

To address priority needs in a systematic and equitable manner, districts must ensure that schools share some common ground in terms of how they organize and deliver educational services. In this light, how much autonomy should school-based planners have? The literature points to several key considerations:

Are training budgets adequate?

As we have noted, successful SBM/SDM requires substantial staff development time and technical assistance. Training and assistance become more critical as teachers and administrators assume greater autonomy. Floden (1987) and his colleagues conclude their five-state study of mathematics content policy with the observation that few school districts have "the inservice education budgets and capacities required for giving substantive preparation for teacher autonomy" (1987:32).

Do we know enough to move to full autonomy on a large scale?

Movement toward a full autonomy model of SBM/SDM is a very recent development. It is associated with experimental school-based management and teacher empowerment strategies which give faculties nearly total control over budget, curriculum, and personnel appointments. There has been little research on the potential utility or practical implementation of these approaches.

However, many schools have become far more effective based on the leadership of teams or committees which have limited autonomy, provided that key elements such as leadership training and staff development time have been adequately addressed. For this reason, school planners should be cautious about moving too quickly or simplistically toward the full autonomy model until more is known about how to do so successfully.

Is there a practical alternative to complete autonomy?

The success of a school improvement project depends on a judicious mixture of autonomy on the part of the planning group, and a measure of leadership from the central office -- a kind of "directed autonomy."

At both the school and classroom levels, faculties at effective schools tend to have significant flexibility and independence in making decisions about what and how they teach and other educational issues. But except at a few, isolated "maverick" schools that have achieved success more or less on their own, success also hinges on strong, supportive central leadership.

This premise rests on the findings of researchers who have studied innovation in general, and planned change in particular. They have found that change is most likely to take hold when it combines elements of "bottom-up" planning with "top-down"

stimulation, guidance, and support (Huberman and Miles 1982; Hall and Hord 1987; McLaughlin 1987).

In this model of directed or "guided" autonomy, says organizational analyst Robert Waterman, involved central leadership lets employees know "that persons at the operating level, who know the most about day-to-day problems, can take action to solve them" (Waterman 1988:82). He adds that directed autonomy can motivate staff commitment by making their jobs more meaningful and exciting (1988:92).

What accounts for the shift in emphasis to district-level or central planning?

Effective schools research stressed that school improvement takes place one school at a time; early school improvement programs based on this research supported the individual school as the strategic unit for change.

Today, the effective schools movement has shifted from this school-by-school approach towards a district or city-wide model. Two patterns have apparently combined to reinforce the emphasis on overall district planning.

First, the clamor for educational reform in the 1980s created a new political environment: local school districts could not satisfy their various constituencies without a comprehensive program of school improvement.

A second trend emerged independent of these larger political considerations. People implementing the effective schools model at the school level realized all too well that individual schools function in a larger context. When a school faculty set out on their own to plan and implement a program, they often found themselves challenged by their colleagues in other schools, or impeded by district-level or central policies and practices. These challenges would arise, for example, when different discipline and grading practices resulted in inconsistent treatment of students within a

single district, or when highly mobile student populations transferred among schools with a district.

These two factors resulted in a new, stronger formulation of the effective schools process, which places great emphasis on school-level change, but stresses the larger organizational context and its role in giving direction and support to the individual school's effort. It builds upon the notion of a district or central plan that supports school change, but assumes that change requires the alignment of policies, programs, and procedures beyond the control of a single school.

Generally speaking, the district/central plan is drafted by a group of teachers, building and district administrators, and community and parent representatives. The process builds upon the collaborative model that had become most common at the school level. Once the plan is written, it goes to the local board of education where, one hopes, it is approved without significant modification. This act establishes the plan as a matter of official policy and as the guiding force for school improvement in the district and in each of its individual schools.

Once district/central planners get involved, is it realistic to call it "school-based" decision-making?

District and central planners must strike a balance between two objectives: to foster change at the school level, their plan must address needed changes in district policies and programs; but they must stop short of mandating what each school must do in its improvement plan.

A successful district/central planning group lends guidance, direction, and human and financial resources to the school-based improvement effort. But if the district/central planners go too far, the school planners' sense of ownership -- and

the involvement and commitment it engenders -- is lost.

What role does the district or central office play?

Based on experience with effective schools projects in Connecticut and elsewhere, Shoemaker (1986:5-6) spells out six key district office or central functions:

* Initiating: Includes articulating mission and goals, introducing a collaborative planning process, and securing public commitment from the superintendent of schools.

* Planning: This includes developing outcomes-based objectives to help "teachers and principals focus their energies on improved teaching and learning."

* Conferring legitimacy: Developing policies to protect practices involving systematic homework, rigorous promotional standards, expansion of academic learning time, and other activities associated with effective schools.

* Enhancing implementation: Includes supporting staff development, technical assistance in collecting and analyzing data, and provision of appropriate resources.

* Evaluating: Includes assisting projects in communicating results, and using data to affect practice in participating schools.

* Sustaining effort: Includes a variety of actions to maintain motivation and continuity through the many years required for fundamental school improvement.

Researchers have documented numerous cases where promising improvement efforts broke down when a new principal was unwilling or unable to sustain initial momentum (e.g., Farrar 1984). Shoemaker and her colleagues (e.g., Pecheone and Shoemaker 1984) have stressed the role of central leadership in ensuring continuity of committed leadership at the building level. In our own experience, some effective schools projects have been severely compromised or virtually destroyed by central administrators who maintained the trappings of a

project, and paid lip service to its importance, but diverted participants' attention to other "hot" educational topics.

There is relatively little research on district/central responsibilities in implementing effective schools projects or otherwise contributing to school improvement. Those studies that do focus on this topic confirm the importance of district/central leadership and support. Murphy and Hallinger (1986), for example, studied superintendents of 12 unusually effective schools and concluded that they were "actively involved" and "influential" in:

* developing district and school goals;
* developing procedures for selecting staff (especially new administrators);
* supervising and evaluating principals;
* establishing and monitoring a "district-wide instructional and curricular focus"; and
* ensuring consistency in "technical core" operations such as the functioning of categorically-funded programs, use of standardized teacher evaluation procedures, and monitoring of curriculum and instruction.

A recent study comparing San Diego County schools which had and had not achieved a "significant measure" of "equity gains" (a more equitable distribution of achievement scores across all economic subgroups) confirmed and extended Murphy and Hallinger's findings: it concluded that equity schools tend to be in districts that stress "control of principal behavior and site level activity" through a range of activities, including selection, supervision, evaluation, and training of principals as well as goal setting, resource allocation, and test analysis. Central office

staff in these districts focussed on "technological core" considerations involving curriculum, instruction, and staff development (Pollack, et al. 1988:29-31). In addition, external direction and support were provided by the county office of education, district consortia, the State Department of Education, and other agencies.

What are the advantages of the district-wide/central model?

The recent emphasis on the district-wide model serves several valuable functions:

* It acknowledges that when it comes to sustaining school planning and improvement, there are no unimportant adults in the system.

* It acknowledges the critical role of the superintendent and board of education members in providing leadership and vision to school reform.

* It recognizes the need to ensure alignment between the school site and the district/central office.

* Finally, it communicates to school-level personnel that they are central to school effectiveness.

Early programs resulted in a growing list of schools that reported having benefitted from school improvement efforts. The more recent emphasis on district-level/central planning is also beginning to bear fruit: there are encouraging signs that districts can effect change if they can balance dedication to efficient coordination with commitment to school-level initiative.

In summary, some "top-down" initiative is critical to the success of school improvement projects, and central decision-makers are responsible for providing many kinds of assistance at each step in the process. Ideally, the central office acts decisively to provide general direction, and at the same time gives sufficient technical and financial assistance to allow successful program implementation (Brickell 1980).

What insights may be gleaned from case studies of district/central participation in SBM/SDM?

Effective schools projects offer numerous examples of this model. In these projects, district or central officials have:

* Facilitated decision-making at the local level by waiving requirements and regulations for individual schools that present reasonable plans for improving student achievement, and show a willingness and capacity to be accountable for the use of funds and for results.

* Specified an instructional management system that stresses higher-order skills, and at the same time provided technical assistance to help programs devise instructional strategies, carry out relevant testing, and add both clerical and computer support to facilitate teacher record-keeping.

* Set reading comprehension standards to identify students needing remedial help, and at the same time provided funding and technical assistance to provide appropriate compensatory services. Both Connecticut and New York use the Degrees of Reading Power Test to implement this approach.

* Prepared district-level discipline codes emphasizing an orderly and safe environment, and at the same time provided resources for in-school suspension rooms, more "time-out" rooms, security guards, or other elements required to ensure that the code is effective and equitable. Brieschke (1987) documents a counter example: a case where the district mandated strict discipline, but did not provide the funding and other resources needed to achieve their goal.

These examples underscore the importance of ensuring that schools have the resources and organizational structures needed to meet system-wide mandates. Central planners must ensure that the changes they introduce are manageable for teachers in terms of record-keeping, contacts with parents, class size, daily student load, and time for staff development as well as individual and collaborative planning.

What happens when central decision-makers abdicate responsibility for helping schools implement mandates? Observers have described the likely result as "nonimplementation" (Brieschke 1987), "illusory implementation" (Popkewitz,

Tabachnick, and Wehlage 1982; Williams 1989) and "phantom implementation" (Pagrow 1988).

MISSION

How important is a clearly articulated mission to the success of SBM/SDM?

Research indicates that articulating the district/central and school mission is a primary consideration. In some cases, the mission may appear self-evident: of course a school district wants its students to achieve. But having defined this overriding goal, planners may ask: What specific steps have we taken in the past to fulfill this mission? How successful have we been? What changes can we make to increase our success?

The experience of a Colorado school system that has implemented site-based management suggests that early in the planning process, participants must address questions that may seem self-evident, but that can muddle the planning process if they are not explicitly discussed and answered. What do we mean by school-based planning and shared decision-making? What end result are we trying to achieve? What is our school's primary mission? (Harrison, Killion, and Mitchell 1989).

Why do we have to settle on one as the primary mission?

Organizational researchers agree that a complex organization like a school cannot have multiple missions; one must emerge as primary (Bennis and Nanus 1986).

A premise of the Effective Schools model is that a school's first and fundamental mission is teaching for learning, and that all other functions must serve that mission. The school must make decisions, take actions, and develop policies,

procedures, programs and practices to maximize success in fulfilling that mission.

Early in the development of the school improvement process, it was assumed that everyone understood and agreed upon a school's primary mission. Today, educators are more realistic, and work to get people to grasp the implications of setting teaching for learning as the school's mission.

IV. THE PLANNING PROCESS

IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

In her synthesis of recent research on school-based management, Jane L. David (1989) wrote:

> School-based management is not a fixed set of rules. It is the opposite of prescription; in fact, by definition it operates differently from one district to the next and from one school to the next and from one year to the next. And that is the point -- the goal is to empower school staff by providing authority, flexibility, and resources to solve the educational problems particular to their schools. (p. 52)

The literature therefore provides little specific data and few recommendations on implementating SBM/SDM management projects, or the planning process that is critical to their success. However, most researchers agree on these key points:

* Schools are unlikely to change without increased autonomy. This can be achieved most effectively by changing the norms and culture established by district leaders, including the superintendent, the school board, and the teachers' union (David 1989)

* School-based planners are most effective when they are given wide latitude in implementing curriculum and instruction at the classroom and school levels.

* The success of SBM/SDM hinges on the availability of substantial, appropriate training and technical assistance, both for teachers and administrators.

* Members of SBM/SDM committees need adequate time, both to develop planning procedures and to hammer out and monitor action plans -- especially if they are considering ideas that may conflict with state or district policy.

* If they are to move decisively to change instructional programming, planning committees need discretionary funds to allocate resources for priority areas.

GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPANTS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

The following guidelines for school-based planners spring from the conclusions of researchers cited in this study:

1. Include representation of all groups -- eg., administrators, teachers, parents -- who have a stake in the outcome on the planning team.

As noted earlier, the research literature offers few specific guidelines concerning optional group size, how it should operate, or mechanisms to use to involve the entire faculty. How the planning team functions will vary from district to district, and even from school to school, depending on the shared values of the people involved and of their school's culture.

2. Establish ground rules for team decision-making.

Comer (1988) outlined a set of rules that all team members (staff and parents) agreed to abide by, e.g.:

* focusing on problem-solving rather than assigning blame for current difficulties;
* recognizing the principal's authority in consultation with the team.
* making group decisions by consensus rather than by note.

3. Keep issues related to improving instruction high on the agenda.

Planners should not wait very long before beginning to address instructional issues. They should place some emphasis on general climate, orderly environment, and related effectiveness correlates which almost always need attention. When other improvements hinge on a specific correlate, it may assume the highest priority.

Effective school plans focus on a range of correlates, involving instructional arrangements, active learning, positive school climate, appropriate monitoring of

student progress, and other aspects of schooling. Instructional issues tend to be more difficult to address and may expose fundamental differences of philosophy and values among planners. For this reason, these issues require more time and resources than, say, climate improvements (Pecheone and Shoemaker 1984), and they should be addressed first. School improvement plans should pay particular attention to grouping, higher-order skills, compensatory services, pacing, and other key aspects of instruction (Levine and Leibert 1987).

4. Base plans for improvement on solid information.

School planning should be data-driven: appropriate information should be collected and used to guide participants as they devise and implement plans for improvement. Generally speaking, planners should train their attention on discrepancies between advantaged and disadvantaged students in acquiring essential learning skills, particularly those involving higher-order learning. School-level analysis of such data not only provides a basis for designing sharply focused improvement initiatives; equally important, it calls attention to the educational outcomes that school and district staff consider most important (Lezotte and Bancroft 1985).

The literature provides numerous examples of effective schools projects in which appropriate data played a central part in shaping effective implementation, including: Murphy and Waynant's (1989) description of a large suburban project; portrayals by the Southern Coalition for Educational Equity (1986) and by Groom (1989) of big city projects; Everson, Toft, Fabert and Garcia's (1986) description of a small suburban project; and descriptions by Gauthier (1982), Shoemaker (1982, 1984) and their colleagues working at the state level in Connecticut.

5. Keep improvement goals sharply focused.

Effective schools projects too often fail because they try to do too much in too short a time (Lezotte and Bancroft 1985). For example, faculties of inner-city elementary schools cannot succeed if they are expected to make substantial improvements in the instruction of reading, language arts, math, science, and social studies -- all in one year (Levine 1985).

This is particularly true when staff development, curriculum development, and other resources are limited -- as they almost always are. But even when resources are substantial, overload is a problem; indeed, abundant resources may contribute to the problem by encouraging school planners to take on too much.

6. Use rigorous, sound methods to monitor student achievement criteria.

The assessment process should be guided by a clear set of principles. The following recommendations are grounded in effective schools research:

* Assess higher-order learning separately, and give more weight to these skills than to mechanical skills (Guthrie 1987; Cooper 1989).

* At the elementary level, give more weight to performance in grades 3-6 than to test results in the earlier grades.

* Pay close attention to testing phenomena and conditions that are likely to skew results and invalidate conclusions about a school's level of effectiveness (Armor 1976; Gottfredson 1988, Walker and Levine 1989).

* Whenever possible, use both norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests, since they shed light on different aspects of achievement and allow different kinds of interpretation (Lezotte 1986; Romberg 1988; Ivens 1988; Brousseau 1989).

* Whenever possible, use multiple measures of students' socio-economic (SES) and racial/ethnic background to control for social-class influences on achievement (Armor et al. 1976; Austin 1978; Levine, et al. 1979; Austin and Holowenzak 1985; and Stringfield and Teddlie, et al. 1987).

* In most cases, judge school effectiveness on the basis of data that have been disaggregated by student SES and race/ethnicity (Edmonds 1978; Brookover and Lezotte 1981; Lark, Blust, and Coldiron 1984; Frederick and Clauset 1985; Brookover 1985; Lezotte 1986; Hornston 1988).

* In judging school effectiveness, examine gender differentials and interactions.

7. Allow for substantial staff development time, building it into the regular workday when possible.

Research shows that teachers need considerable time and practice to acquire new or improved instructional approaches, and that in effective schools, staff development is an integral and ongoing activity. Working with a small group of teachers to promote more independent reading in a suburban elementary school, Kurth and Stromberg (1984) found that it took a great deal of time for teachers to gain effectiveness in enhancing students' comprehension skills. Indeed, success depended on "continuous, almost Herculean" staff development efforts (1984:2).

8. Be realistic about the need for technical assistance.

Technical assistance -- particularly in the form of specialized staff -- is vitally important to school improvement programs. They help faculties assess their current levels of effectiveness, identify problems, develop the capacity to work together productively, and initiate and carry out significant changes in educational programming and delivery. Depending on the history, nature and scope of a project, technical assistance may involve the state department of education, central office

specialists, organizational development consultants, other external consultants, and in-school staff.

Researchers have documented the utility of technical assistance in effective schools projects that involve SBM/SDM. Pecheone and Shoemaker (1984), Arbuckle (1986), and Shoemaker (1986) described the substantial specialized assistance made available by the Maine and Connecticut State Education Departments. Eubanks and Levine (1983) describe technical assistance arrangements in New York City projects; some required a facilitator in each school for the equivalent of at least one day a week.

Groom (1989) portrays a successful big-city project in which 18 elementary schools have their own full-time instructional specialists, and in addition share three full-time effective schools staff and other external resources. Kopple's (1985) assessment of school improvement efforts in Philadelphia conclude that a facilitator must be present in the school at least one day a week for several years. Murphy and Waynant (1989) describe similar arrangements for a project involving predominantly black elementary schools in a large suburban district.

Technical assistance and staff development are essential in part because more than ever, true school effectiveness is -- or should be -- defined in terms of improvement in students' comprehension and other higher-order skills (Anderson, et al. 1985; Herber and Nelson-Herber 1988; Honig 1988). Recently developed instructional methods for improving comprehension have been impressive and widespread; they constitute a virtual revolution in educators' capacity to help children grasp new concepts and ideas (Pearson 1985); but until recently, there has been "essentially nothing in instructional materials or in teacher training that helps the

teacher learn what to do when the child does not understand" (MacGinitie and MacGinitie 1986:x). As a result, teachers in most schools need help of various kinds to make their instruction more effective.

9. Avoid strategies that bureaucratize your initiatives.

Too often, promising improvement plans are strangled in a bureaucratic tangle during the implementation phase: ideas give way to forms and checklists, as mandated components are rigidly applied in participating schools and classrooms.

Effective schools research has a great deal to say about issues that warrant consideration in designing an improvement plan (Lezotte 1982a). In particular, it has clearly established these principles:

* Participating schools and classrooms need sufficient scope to adapt a proposed curricular or instructional change to their setting.

* Informed individuals, rather than bureaucratic regulations and checklists, should help to guide the implementation process.

* Impersonal control mechanisms may be convenient for high-level decision-makers, but they do not help educators solve practical problems; participants' personal knowledge and grasp of complex realities is far more important. (Spence, Takei, and Sim 1978; Fullan 1982; Cox, French, and Loucks-Horsley 1987.)

10. Seek out materials, methods, and implementation strategies that have proven successful elsewhere.

A school that develops its own plans and implementation strategy need not re-invent the wheel; indeed, faculties cannot be expected to create successful programs entirely on their own initiative (Lezotte and Bancroft 1985). However, approaches developed in other schools or projects can seldom if ever be transplanted successfully without considerable adaptation. In fact, off-the-shelf strategies for initiating change or improving instruction may be dangerous, if they are

introduced as a substitute for the hard work and considerable resources required to bring about real improvement. Planners are most likely to fulfill their mission if they carefully review and adapt approaches that have been successfully developed and implemented at another site.

Planners might consider, for example, some of the following approaches, which come out of recent research:

* Using "effective teaching" approaches to systematize the lesson delivery of teachers who may be weak in this area (Brookover 1972).

* Adopting curricular materials designed specifically to develop students' comprehension skills (Levine and Stark 1982).

* Building on strategies designed to involve parents and other community representatives (Comer 1980, 1988; Murphy and Waynant 1989; Henderson, et al. 1985).

* Using test instruments, such as the Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) test, that are designed to help teachers plan and deliver instruction and focuses on improving comprehension.

* Experimenting with cooperative learning strategies that help engage students more actively in learning (Brookover 1982; Slavin 1987).

* Introducing Teacher Expectations for Student Achievement (TESA) training early in a project to sensitize teachers and help develop their skills in reaching low achievers (Brookover 1982; Olson 1986).

Additional approaches that have been successfully adapted by local projects are described in a 1989 volume edited by Lezotte and Taylor.

Visits to other schools and districts allow planners to make informed decisions about whether successful practices would work in their own situation. In this sense, travel opportunities have a great impact on planners' capacity to make significant improvements in their own schools.

V. CONCLUSIONS

This report addresses four major issues in the effective schools movement that bear directly on SBM/SDM: the teacher's voice; parent/community involvement; district/central leadership; and mission. It draws general conclusions about the planning process.

The Teacher's Voice

* There is a great deal of support for making teachers key players in school reform. But there has been little research to guide principals and teachers in collaborative planning efforts.

* Today, most teachers take part in textbook selection and curriculum planning, but play virtually no role in crucial decisions on budget, staff, and school policy.

* Greater teacher participation is not inconsistent with administrative action and initiative at the superintendent or principal level.

* If initiatives are too fast, or too radical, and run counter to teachers' perceived self-interest, they may prove counterproductive.

Parent/Community Involvement

* Narrowing the gap between students' experiences at home and in the classroom is a major challenge facing policy-makers.

* Parent advisory committees are widespread, but there is little evidence to date that these groups hold meaningful decision-making power.

District/Central Leadership

* Successful school-based planning hinges on a judicious mixture of autonomy on the part of the planning group, and a measure of leadership from the central office -- a kind of "directed autonomy."

* Leadership and support from central decision-makers (and, in projects with state government participation, from state officials) are vital to success.

* Effective schools researchers stress the importance of district/central leadership in setting the mission, priorities, and directions for successful change.

* District/central planners must strike a balance between two objectives: to foster change at the school level, their plan must address needed changes in district or central policies and programs; but they must stop short of mandating what each school must do in its improvement plan.

* Change is most likely to take hold when it combines elements of "bottom-up" planning with "top-down" stimulation, guidance, and support.

* Today, the effective schools movement shifted from this school-by-school approach to a district city-wide model.

* This model builds upon the notion of a district/central plan that supports school change, but assumes that change requires the alignment of policies, programs, and procedures beyond the control of a single school.

* Ideally, the district/central office acts decisively to provide general direction, and at the same time gives sufficient technical and financial assistance to allow successful program implementation.

* When central decision-makers abdicate responsibility for helping schools implement mandates, the result is "nonimplementation," "illusory implementation," or "phantom implementation."

Mission

* Articulating the district/central and school mission is a primary consideration.

* Organizational researchers agree that a complex organization like a school cannot have multiple missions; one must emerge as primary.

* Early in the planning process, participants must work together to answer key questions: what do we mean by SBM/SDM? What end result are we seeking?

The Planning Process

* School-based planners are most effective when they are given wide latitude in implementing curriculum and instruction at the classroom and school levels.

* The success of SBM/SDM hinges on the availability of substantial, appropriate training and technical assistance, both for teachers and administrators.

* Members of school-based planning committees need adequate time, both to develop planning procedures and to hammer out and monitor action plans -- especially if they are considering ideas that may conflict with state or district policy.

* If they are to move decisively to change instructional programming, planning committees need discretionary funds.

Research and practice suggest the following broad guidelines for:

* Include all parties -- eg., administrators, teachers and parents -- who have a stake in the outcomes of the educational process.

* Establish ground rules for team decision making.

* Keep issues related to improving instruction high on the agenda.

* Base plans for improvement on solid information.

* Keep improvement goals sharply focused.

* Use rigorous, sound methods to monitor student achievement criteria.

* Allow for substantial staff development time, building it into the regular work day whenever possible.

* Be realistic about the need for technical assistance.

* Avoid strategies that bureaucratize your initiatives.

* Seek out materials, methods, and implementation strategies that have proven successful elsewhere.

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